

Volume 21, Number 2, July 2014, Page 93-103

Theses Originality: An Initial Effort to Examine Students' Final Projects

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15548/jt.v21i2.86>

Abstract: Thesis is a prerequisite for graduation in all academic institutions. Higher Education institutions, such as Imam Bonjol Islamic State Institute requires its students to write a thesis in order to graduate. Students write their theses and they were examined before the board of examiners. However, students found it difficult to write 'good' theses that show academic honesty and high level of originality. This is a big issue in our institution, this article, therefore examines factors that reduce originality of students' theses. Having analysed over 10 theses using content analysis method, the authors found that almost all theses contain issues that reduces the originality of the theses. Students frequently commit structural plagiarism, in which they tend to follow the structure of their colleagues' theses, and only made minor changes. Other finding showed that in stating their research problem, students make a claim without appropriate justification. Issues of referencing and paraphrasing are two important issues that reduce qualities of students' theses.

Keywords: Theses, theses originality, EFL students, higher education institution

INTRODUCTION

Thesis is one of the pre-requisites for students to obtain their university degrees (Lipson, 2005). Undergraduate and Graduate students are obliged to write a long piece of work, known as the thesis or professional project. The process of thesis writing may take 6 months to a year depending on the system adopted by particular universities. However, it is a common practice that students write theses in the final semester of their Senior Year at colleges. The length of theses also varies from one setting to another. Some universities require their students to write a- 8.000 word thesis, while others require their students to write over a -10.000 word thesis.

In addition, there are many different types of thesis in the academia. Some adopt traditional forms of a thesis. For example, there has been a standard rule in writing a thesis, in

which title and sub-titles required in a thesis have been fixed. A traditional thesis, for instance, starts with an introduction section, and then followed by literature review in chapter two. In chapter three, students usually write the methodology section, and in the final chapter, students usually dedicate for the result and analysis of research findings. However, other universities are more flexible in the form of a thesis they require students to write. This can be found in Australian and American universities. In those universities, students may write theses in many different forms. They may write them referring to the standard traditional forms, at the same time, the students may write their theses creatively. For example, students may replace 'introduction' section with 'framing the research' and they may also alter other sections to best meet their theses' objectives.

Although students in some universities, such as in Australia and the United States may

write theses in varieties of forms, students are required to write theses that meet certain academic standards, in terms of their language expression, the coherency of the paragraph and the originality of the language used. In the first chapter, for example, students introduce their research problems and justify their research rationale. In the second chapter, students review existing literature, such as journals and books. Students need to criticize and bring them in light with their research. Finally, in the third or fourth chapter, students usually identify their ways of answering their research questions.

In addition, upon writing theses, students may choose methodologies that meet their innate interest. For example, they may lean themselves toward quantitative methodology, in which they can select pre, quasi and true experimental research, cross-sectional research, longitudinal research, comparative, and quantitative case study research. For those who are not keen at handling some statistical issues, they may go toward qualitative methodology. This kind of methodology also provides a wide range of research, such as phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, classroom action research, and qualitative case study.

Nevertheless, students are required to write a high quality thesis. They should produce a 'good' thesis in order to graduate. Characteristics of a good thesis are shared by all universities across the academia regardless of their different belief on the forms of a thesis. A 'good' thesis must be focused. This is the first characteristic of a good thesis. The research should examine a small issue in details - 'research tells lots about little and does not tell little about lots'. Next, theoretical clarity and critical appraisal of literature are also two important components of a 'good' thesis. The other characteristic of a 'good' thesis is the one which shows appropriate methodology. A 'good' thesis represents a strong linkage between statement of the problems, reviews of literature, methodology and methods (Wellington, 2010).

The other most important element of a 'good' thesis is the issue of originality.

Wellington (2010) suggests that originality is perceived in multiple ways. However, he suggests that many research scholars agree that originality is the level of the 'newness' shown in the thesis. To meet the high level of originality in the thesis, students are required to be able to reveal "new knowledge, new research process and approaches, new synthesis, new charting or mapping of territory, new implications, [and] revisiting a recurrent issue" (p. 87).

Producing a good thesis is the expectation of all universities and colleges. Therefore, students are required to write their theses in such a way to meet the academic standard of their respective universities. For example, before submission, students are expected to review their theses with colleagues and supervisors as well, and they should focus on elements that make their theses meet characteristics of a good thesis, such as the appropriateness of their methods with the statement of problems and also the level of originality.

ORIGINALITY

- You say something no one has said before
- You do empirical work that has not been done before
- You synthesize things that have not been put together before
- You make new interpretation of someone else's material/ideas
- You do something in this country that has only been done elsewhere
- You take an existing technique and apply it to a new area
- You work across disciplines, using different methodologies
- You look at topics that people in your discipline have not looked at

- You test existing knowledge in an original way
- You add to knowledge in a way that has not been done before
- You write down a new piece of information for the first time
- You give a good exposition of someone else's idea
- You continue an original piece of work.

Murray, 2011, p. 7-71

Since originality is one of the most important components of a 'good' thesis, this article aims at exploring the level of originality in students' theses. It delimits itself to engage in a close scrutiny on the extent in which students show the level of originality in their theses. This research does not go further to examine students' language expressions and their research findings, since these components are beyond the research's main objective. This issue is worth investigating, since its findings will become a starting point for lecturers and supervisors to help their students produce theses with high merit.

Researchers are expected to form research question(s) prior to their research endeavours. This proposal therefore, raises one main research question as its attempt to guide the study, and will be followed with several sub-research questions.

As exploring thesis originality is the main purpose of the study, we ask a question as "What is the level of originality in the students' theses?" we then move on asking more detailed questions as follows:

1. Do the theses show originality in their research statements, methodology, reviews of literature, and findings?.
2. What are the most common mistakes do students make in their thesis that

reduce the level of originality of the theses?

To answer these research questions, we used document analysis as the method of data collection. This method seems appropriate to answer the proposed research questions. I also referred to characteristics of a 'good' thesis as proposed by some commentators in the field, such as Lipson (2005) and Murray (2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, we examine issues on writing theses. The most important components need addressing in writing the thesis are selecting the topics, writing literature review, choosing appropriate methodology and selecting methods of data collection and data analysis. These topics are selected because they speak to the research findings. Silverman (2005) suggests that in qualitative theses, the literature review is written in the final stage after preliminary data analysis has been made. For this reason, the sub-topics analyzed in this section speak to the data obtained in this research.

Choosing The Research Topic

This is the first important step, all researchers need to consider before dwelling into their research journey. Choosing an appropriate research topics is both challenging and intriguing. It is challenging because one is required to engage in in-depth reflection on what to focus on; it is intriguing because being able to select appropriate topics will allow one to start their research journey. As selecting topic is important in all research endeavours, many research scholars suggest steps that can be undertaken by some researchers. For example, Anderson and Poole (2001) and Lipson (2005) suggests that when selecting a topic, researchers or students need to consider if there is adequate supervision about the topics. They may also reflect on what issues they are actually interested in. For this reason, we would suggest

that research problems that may turn to be research topics are not only issues contradicting to what is expected. Interested phenomenon, under-research issues, and replication on previous studies could be potential research topic.

In addition, Silverman (2005) provide detailed strategies in selecting topics. These strategies are *simplistic inductivism* the 'kitchen sink' gambit and *grand theory*. In the *simplistic induction*, researchers are to explore a topic without stating any assumption on certain issues. Inductive reasoning explore the world by looking through its natural forms, there is no hypotheses is not testes; it instead generate the hypothesis. This strategy may bring some weaknesses, but it helps researchers identify their topics. In engaging in simplistic inductivism, researchers draw back to their previous knowledge built overtime. It is a kind of self-explanatory, in which ones may refer to historical, contextual, and political sensitivity in their attempt to generate a research topic. The other strategy researchers may take within simplistic inductivism is to follow up other findings. They could use existing research finding to raise a new research topic.

The second strategy suggested by Silverman (2005) is *kitchen sink gambit*. With this strategy, researchers may start with a broader topic and narrow it down to get researchable topic. This strategy is very important to take into account, since a good research topic is depth 'instead of breath, and this strategy will help researchers identify narrow and doable research topics. To do so researchers follow three strategies: the flow chart, find a puzzle, and the zoom lens. In selecting their research topics, researchers may draw a flow chart, which then help them narrow down their research topics.

In addition, the researchers use three kinds of puzzle. They ask questions 'how or why did X develop? (a developmental puzzle); how does x work? (a mechanical puzzle); what cause x or what influence does x have on y (a causal puzzle)'. This three kinds of puzzle as

purposed by Mason (1996, p. 14, as cited in Silverman, 2005, p. 87). Referring to these puzzles, a developmental puzzle, researchers are able to draw their research topics in three different ways. In the first puzzle, researchers may ask a question such as 'how or why do ESL students learn grammar in class? This kind of question leads students to develop qualitative case study or qualitative classroom research. In addition, the mechanical puzzle, researchers may start selecting their topic by asking question as 'how speaking competent can be developed?' With this research question, researchers may develop qualitative or quantitative experimental research design. In the third puzzle, researchers may ask a question such as 'to what extent the implementation of CLT improve students speaking competent'? In this question, researchers develop correlational or causal-comparative research. The other strategy under the kitchen sink gambit is the zoom lens. In the zoom lens strategy, researchers may focus on a particular issue, and within that particular issue, researchers need to focus on a smaller issue-the manageable narrowed issue.

The third effective strategy suggested by Silverman (2005) is the *grand theorists*. In this third strategy, researchers may ignore fashions. Researchers are suggested not to be attracted to conduct research on popular topics. In selecting a topic, researchers are encouraged to find under-researched and interesting topics. One way to find this kind of topic is through extensive reading and supervisors' helps. Through reading, researchers or students are able to draw on important topics, which do not gain sufficient attention from mainstream researchers.

Silverman (2005) suggests that all researchers need to pay attention on narrow and workable topics. To get this kind of topic, researchers need to first ask workable research questions. A research question can be workable if it is answerable, interconnected, and substantively relevant.

Writing Literature Review

Literature review is also important in a thesis. It contains reviews of previous studies and also the use of theories. In reviewing the previous studies, researchers describe, analyze, compare, contrast, and also provide critique to previous studies. The previous study informs the readers that similar studies, which different focus have been conducted elsewhere. For that reason in all theses, researchers should provide gaps between their research and others.

Avoiding Plagiarism

Plagiarism is considered a crime in academia. However, different cultural sites put different weight on plagiarism. In some settings, plagiarism is not considered as cheating, example, plagiarism is not seen as a criminal act, it is indeed discouraged but it is not regarded as violating the intellectual integrity. It is also basically considered as academic dishonesty at college.

Despite this different understanding of plagiarism, it is regarded as stealing one's ideas. Someone can plagiarize through textual and prototypical plagiarism. In the former form of plagiarism, students simply copy other people's work without paraphrasing. Textual borrowing, students usually copy exactly the original or they may modify the text slightly through adding or deleting some contents.

In the later form of plagiarism, students fall into plagiarism because of the failure to put quotation mark, to remember the page number and to properly paraphrase. In this type of plagiarism, students do paraphrase, but their paraphrasing is closely shadowing the original (Stapleton, 2012).

Students are trapped in plagiarism for several reasons. The first reason is that students are unaware of what count as plagiarism. They fail to understand what kind of writing considered plagiarism and what is not. Some

students are not aware if they actually have plagiarized someone's work (Ballantine & Larres, 2012). Students copy other's work closely without realizing if what they do is actually plagiarism. Second, students are trapped into plagiarism is because they do not understand correct referencing styles. Students fail to do proper citation and also refer to what they cite properly. The third reason is that students are accustomed to copy others' work and paste them to their paper. The fourth reason for students' likeliness to plagiarize is because they do not considered plagiarism as a bad action. They in fact considered cheating in exam is more unacceptable than plagiarism. They tend to reduce the negative effect of plagiarism.

METHOD

This study was conducted through qualitative research methodology-grounded theory, in which data was used to generate theories. This kind of research allows researchers to go in-depth into the heart of their investigation of certain issues. As the main aim of this study is exploration of students' theses, we perceive that qualitative method of data collection will enable us to answer the research questions proposed in this study.

As it is a grounded theory study, we are not required to engage in a detailed and comprehensive review of literature. Silverman (2004) in fact suggests that in all forms of qualitative studies, theoretical framework and reviews of literature are written in the final stage after data are collected and analysed. Unlike Quantitative paradigm, Qualitative research is analysed inductively, in which theory is generated from data. It is for this reason that this article does not include a chapter or a sub-topic on literature review in a special section.

Purposive Sampling

As it is a qualitative investigation, we did not identify specific population and sampling in this article since it does not require

one. However, to show the source of our data, we explicitly mentioned the population and the sampling of this study. Theses under study will be those written by English Department students of IAIN Imam Bonjol Padang. All theses submitted in 2012 academic year were taken as the population of the study. Nevertheless, to narrow the subject of investigation, we used purposive sampling. Babbie (2008) suggests that purposive sampling is:

A type of nonprobability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative. Also called judgmental sampling (2008, p. 204)

In this investigation, the research team considered to select theses focusing on experimental research, which look into strategies of teaching writing.

In the following section, we looked more closely methods of data collection and data analysis in the following sub-topics.

Technique of Data Collection

This study is qualitative library research, in which the focus of analysis is students' theses. No attempt to confirm the theses to the authors is made. The study implemented document analysis and theses examination guideline as methods of data collection. The study selected 16 to 20 theses written on similar issues in the same methodology. For example, we selected theses written on a particular skill, such as speaking, writing and reading. The other consideration in selecting theses is the nature methodology used in the study. The theses selected are experimental research focusing on the implementation of strategies in teaching writing.

To reveal rich data, we adopted document analysis as the method of data collection. There are steps taken by thesis examiners in reviewing a thesis. Murray (2011)

and Murray and Pearce (2005) suggest that examiners need to look at references cited by students in writing their theses. Next, Lynne Pearce and Rowena Murray assert that examiners need to move slowly examining the contents, the abstract. The most important phase of examination that examiners need to take is evaluating how critical students write literature review. In addition, examiners are also expected to engage in a very close scrutiny on the way in which, the students write methodology section and how it helps them answer their research questions (Murray, 2011; Murray & Pearce, 2005). Even though the analysis swaps across multiple directions, as the aim of the study suggests we focused would only focus our analysis on theses originality *per se*. Therefore in examining theses originality, we refer to the work of Murray (2011).

In this study, we went through several phases of data collection. First, we selected theses on experimental research, in which they investigate some strategies to be implemented in teaching writing skill. We choose theses adopting experimental research because of their availability. Students at Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Education, mostly conduct experimental research. This information can be easily obtained in the department's archive. Having collected the theses, we identified some issues to focus on when analysing theses by referring to Murray, (2011). We examined the originality of theses by scrutinizing these several components, such as the newness in synthesis of findings; new ways of interpretation of the phenomena; and credits given to someone else's ideas (see Murray, 2011, p. 70-71 or appendix for more details).

Technique of Data Analysis

This study is conducted through qualitative methodology and methods of data analysis also adopted qualitative ways of analysing data. In analysing the data therefore, we would refer to the work of Babbie (2008) who suggests that one way to analyse qualitative data is through coding. There are three types of coding techniques as suggested by Babbie: open, axial and selective coding. In open

coding, we broke down the data, analysed and then compared them in order to put the data into some categories. After examining theses, we take notes on paragraphs that do not represent 'originality' as suggested by Murray (2011).

In addition, in axial coding, we put the data into new categories and linked them with other categories. Issues considered as reducing theses originality were gathered and then we link them with other categories. In selective coding, we would proceed to refine the categories, and selected the ones that are central to the concepts. For example, we would identify factors that reducing the originality of the theses and identify the central concepts.

In displaying the data, we would make them available through tables. However, we did not put them into percentage to keep the originality of the qualitative data. We would rather provide descriptive analysis and elaborate findings in words and in-depth explanation.

Ethical Issues

Qualitative research emphasizes on close interaction with the participants. The interactions will clash with certain sensitive issues, which endanger the participants in some ways. In examining these theses, therefore, we would refer to the authors of theses with pseudonym to cover identity of authors. We would also protect the identity of theses' supervisors and examiners.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Initially, in this research we intend to examine around 30 students' thesis. However, as we examined around 10 to 15 thesis, we reach the saturation stage, in which allow us to quit our investigation. Bryman (2004) indicates that saturation is:

...you carry on collecting data (observing, interviewing, collecting documents) until you have achieved *theoretical saturation*.... This means that: successive interviews/observations have both formed the basis for the creation of a category and confirmed its

importance; there is no need to continue with data collection in relation to that category or cluster of category; instead, the researcher should move on and generate hypotheses out of the categories that are building up and then move on to collecting data in relation to these hypotheses (p. 305).

This suggests that having examined some thesis, we do not have to examine some more sources of data, since similar categories emerged consistently from those several theses. The findings of the research were treated in such a way to establish the themes, categories and then turn them into concepts. We used open coding, axial coding and then we use selective coding to analyse the data (refer to Babbie, 2008 to get more information on these code systems).

The findings of this study have answered the two research questions of the study. The answers for these research questions can be categorised into several themes, which were elaborated in more detailed in the following several sections. The three main findings drawn from our extensive data are 'claim, plagiarism and referencing'. This suggests that students' theses under reviewed contain some claims, plagiarized paragraphs and fault referencing. The act of plagiarism and the genuineness of the theses are two common mistakes made that reduce the quality of their theses.

Claim

Out of fifteen theses we examined, almost all of the authors tend to blame students and teachers upon stating their research problem. For example, in experimental studies we examined, we found that the authors state research problems by putting the blame to students and teachers. In their sentence, the authors write the following statement:

In our preliminary research, we found that teachers cannot teach well. They use traditional methods and make students bored. Students are also not very active; in which they do not want to speak in the classroom.

This kind of assertion emerges in the majority of students' theses we examined. These similarities in argumentation indeed reduce the quality of students' theses. This fact indicates that the originality of their theses is lacking. Students failed to show the genuineness of their work. The finding also indicates that research problems do not emerge from students' curiosity.

It seems to us that that most students simplify the nature of research 'problem' in their research. As suggested earlier, when stating their problems, students tend to make a strong claim with negativity. The authors of the theses see research problem as a negative phenomenon. In fact, research problem is not limited to negative issues (Silverman, 2005). Research problems range from one's interests, under-researched issues, and also confirming previous research. For this reason, in many theses we examined similar lines of reasoning appear in the theses.

In addition, when stating a problem, they tend to engage in structural plagiarism, in which they merely change some wordings, but the writing structure remains similar. For example, in most theses we examined, students argue as in the following:

Most teachers used traditional methods...Arikunto states that experimental research is the only research that can test the causality of variable.

This common statement emerges in different theses, in which only a slight change was made. Stapleton (2012) argues that when writer fail to engage in sufficient alteration of others' comments, they have plagiarized others' work.

When students are not able to show a uniqueness of their theses, these theses are considered as not original (Murray, 2011, Silverman, 2005). Most students whose theses we examined do not show any uniqueness of their theses, and thus these theses have lack of originality. In their very first page of the theses, for instance students have failed to show the originality of their theses. Students often follow

the pattern of other theses and thus similar mistakes are found.

Plagiarism

In chapter two and three of the students' theses, we found that students plagiarized intensively. In fact students committed various forms of plagiarism. Upon scrutinizing students' theses, we found four most frequent forms of plagiarism. For example, students only copied others' work and pasted them to their theses. Scholars identify that many students, especially L2 students violate academic integrity, such as plagiarize others' work because of several reasons. For example, they may conduct prototypical plagiarism, in which they are careless in writing as omitting the quotation mark, they do not put page number and they do patching writing, which is the failure to integrate their ideas with the authors (Stapleton, 2012; Vardi, 2012). Students may also committed textual plagiarism (Stapleton, 2012) through simply copying the original work.

Most students upon writing their theses engage in the latter form of plagiarism. They simply copied others' ideas as long as these authors' language. Students did not really engage in the attempt to produce their own voice through writing with their own perspective in their own language. Common forms of writing can be easily traced in various theses being examined. We return to this issue in the following analysis.

In addition, we also found in the theses that students in many instances fail to do proper citation. In claiming a certain issue, for example, students tend to make a claim suggesting that teachers are not capable of teaching. However, they did not support their claim with citation or concrete example. Proper citation is indeed important in academic writing, since this kind of writing requires writers to provide evidence and backup their argument. Therefore, the failure to do so will result in low quality of writing.

Finally, the most important finding generated from our analysis of the manuscripts

is the structure of the paragraph. Students most of the time change the wording and yet they maintain the structure of sentences. In the following sub sections, we intend to examine each of this issue in detail.

Copy Paste

This kind of plagiarism is found in many places surrounding students' theses. However, the sort of plagiarism was remarkably found in chapter two and chapter three. As we compare several theses, some similar paragraphs emerge in those many theses. There is no or little change has been made in the text. One student, for example wrote a certain issue in a particular page, and the other students wrote similar ideas and language in different page number. According to Ballantine and Larres (2012), students have been accustomed to copy and paste the work of others. Most writers are also not aware that copying and pasting violate the academic integrity. This customary occur because students misunderstand the true nature of plagiarism. Most L2 students according to Stapleton (2012) tend to plagiarize because they do not have sufficient understanding of plagiarism. Those students as Stapleton (2012) suggests regard that copying and pasting others' work is acceptable as long as they cite the source.

Students plagiarize in chapter two when writing a certain concept. For example, if they include a concept, such as the 'writing concept', students tend to take the work of their colleagues and paste them in their theses without making any changes. We could easily identify similarities in the form of writing in many pages of the theses. We found in two theses that student committed plagiarism in 15 places in chapter two alone.

The inability to understand the source leads one to plagiarize unintentionally. Some research, such as Ballantine and Larres (2012); Stapleton (2012); and Vardi (2012) found that most students plagiarise without intention. They are trapped in plagiarism because they do not see it as plagiarism. This failure will definitely reduce the level of their theses originality.

Fail to Paraphrase

Upon examining students' theses, we also found that students do not paraphrase well. When students are not able to do a proper paraphrasing, they will be trapped into unintentional plagiarism. Students may plagiarize because of their not knowing of how to paraphrase appropriately. Vardi (2012) suggests that it is important to train students the ability to paraphrase well. This is because good paraphrasing is a pre-requisite for a better academic writing

Paraphrasing is indeed complicated. One needs a certain level of competence to be able to paraphrase appropriately. Someone may attempt to paraphrase certain paragraphs but their paraphrasing is shadowing the original texts (Stapleton, 2012). When paraphrasing, students only change some word with their synonyms and no structural shifts are made. For this reason alone, Vardi (2012) suggests that student be trained how to paraphrase effectively.

Ballantine and Larres (2012) identify that most students do not understand what paraphrase is. Therefore, it makes sense that students fail to paraphrase well. In the theses we examined, we found that some sentences are well written, while others are not written in Standard English. This suggests that students did not necessarily write out of their curiosity. They did not provide the originality of ideas; they instead took other work and pasted them into theirs.

Structural Plagiarism

The other obvious form of plagiarism we found that students usually were trapped in structural plagiarism. It means that student follow the structure of other theses. For example, in the way they develop the background of the study, they follow tightly the structure of other theses. They do the same in chapter two. In chapter three, in which they write their rational on research methodology, the structural plagiarism is more obvious. In discussing the nature of experimental research, population and sample, for example, students

write in a very similar structural form and in fact follow the same line of reasoning.

Stapleton (2012) argue some students do structural plagiarism because of the belief that that kind of plagiarism is acceptable. This theoretical framework may be appropriate to adopt upon discussing students' theses under our examination.

Citation and Referencing

In many instances, students fail to cite and write a proper referencing. Students refer to many sources in their theses, especially in chapter two. However, they seem not to list them in reference lists. There are two rationales for this fault. First, students failed to record all sources they have cited. The second reason is that students draw this literature from the internet, in which they tend not to pay attention on citations of the article they got in the internet. Failure to do proper citation and referencing is an indication of lack of theses originality.

DISCUSSION

Originality has many different meanings. It convey negative as well as positive connotation. The former form of originality refers to the theses, which do not derive and imitate from the work of other individuals, while the latter conveys the message that it is a form of novel, inventive and imaginative (Silverman, 2005). In Silverman (2005), originality is defined more rigidly-the ability to display 'independent critical thought' (p. 73). A thesis is considered to reach a certain level of originality if it is 'genuinely the work of the candidate...contribution to the knowledge...satisfactory as regards literary presentation...suitable for publication...' (Silverman, 2005, p. 70).

Referring to this definition of originality, the theses under examination do not reach the level of originality. Most theses do not reflect a genuine work of the author, since plagiarism takes place in many parts of students' theses.

The finding of the theses under analysis, however may contribute to the knowledge, in which they show some findings recommending good classroom practice.

In writing theses, students commit multiple forms of plagiarism as suggested earlier. Plagiarism is unacceptable in the academia, since it is considered as stealing others' ideas.

CONCLUSION

This article has highlighted main issues that contribute to lack of students' theses originality. Plagiarism, claim, referencing are three major issues that are committed by some students at the institution. Students engage in committing a certain degree of plagiarism. The plagiarism occurs due to their inability to paraphrase well and to cite appropriate citations. Students also tend to make a strong claim upon stating their research problem. The article has given some insights into students' problems in writing theses. Understanding students' problems allow lecturers to find effective solutions.

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